



Bluebird Monitor

OBS supports the return of Eastern Bluebirds
and other native cavity nesting birds

Fall 2017



Ask Madame WingNut Fostering Five

By Paula Ziebarth

Photos by Paula Ziebarth and Susan Guarasci

On June 6, I got a phone call. The Ohio Wildlife Center (OWC) had four newly hatched Eastern Bluebird young and one pipping egg that needed fostering. The person bringing the young to the center told OWC that they found their nesting female Eastern Bluebird dead in their yard and her young needed help.

I generally get several calls from OWC per season to foster native cavity nesting birds into nest boxes on trails I monitor. Although OWC has volunteers and resources to raise injured and orphaned birds – nothing replaces being parented by their own kind and being taught the things they need to know to survive in the wild and have the best outcomes.



Four chicks and pipping egg

both parents are there to attend to them. In this age of smartphones and messaging, a wonderful way to gather and share data is through phone pictures of young in the nest and young to be fostered. Fostering young birds generally works very well if a match can be

found with young similar in age (no more than one to two days apart in development).

Injured or orphaned young require care from a licensed wildlife rehabber to get them ready for their new home. Susan Guarasci, an OWC volunteer, was providing special home care for these little ones. I work with different monitors throughout Delaware County who keep their data current on the Cornell NestWatch database. After reviewing trail(s) data and contacting several monitors, I was able to find several different matches for these young birds (and egg).

On June 7, Susan placed the pipping egg in a nest box on Liberty Park Trail. I had contacted the monitor of this trail, Connie Dolder. She told me this box had 3 eggs that the female had been incubating for 13



Susan Guarasci from Ohio Wildlife Center at Safari Golf Club Bluebird Trail in Powell, Ohio

Careful monitoring and data records are very important when attempting to foster birds. It is necessary to know the age of the natural young and foster young; the number of natural young (we never put more birds in a nest than occurs in nature so never more than a total of 6 young can be in the nest for Eastern Bluebirds), and the presence of both parents. If there are additional mouths to feed, it is important that

Faux Pas foster trip with 7 young in nest overnight



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days and were due to hatch the following day and was happy to have us try to foster the egg in the nest.

Susan then met me at Safari Golf Club Trail where there were two possible foster nest matches for a couple of the nestlings. She gave the nestlings some crickets and mealworms and we placed one chick in Box 5 at Safari. Darlene Sillick and I had checked that nest the evening before and had discovered 5 newly hatched chicks. The nest had a clutch of 6 eggs, but quick check looked like only 5 had hatched. After placing nestling there, we took several pictures with our smartphones.

We then moved to Box 16 at Safari. 4 of 5 eggs had hatched the previous evening; the remaining egg was capped (egg shell from a different hatched egg deposited on one end of unhatched egg) and I removed the egg shell, hoping it might hatch. We added a foster nestling to the nest.

On June 8, Susan and I met at Safari Golf Club Trail to check on the young and make some readjustments. When I looked at the pictures we had taken from Box 5, I realized that all 6 of the eggs in that nest had hatched after all. There were now 7 with foster nestling in there! We removed the smallest nestling and placed it in Box 16 which was a better match. The unhatched (still) egg was carefully inspected and removed after we determined it was not viable. Each box now had 6 young.



Susan feeding chick before it is fostered

We still had two young nestlings to foster. After checking database, I had contacted monitor Teresa Staats who was in the field and sent us several smartphone pictures of possible foster nests. Teresa monitors the Recreation Unlimited Camp Trail in Ashley, Ohio. Susan and I hopped in the car for

the 40 minute drive to foster our last two young. Susan kept the young warm and fed them on the way.

Teresa had two possible nest matches for us. The best candidate had one nestling that had hatched the day before and 4 eggs. Careful inspection of eggs indicated that they were nonviable and we were able to foster the last two young in the nest. These birds now had three young to care for.



Susan Guarasci and Paula Ziebarth Fostering Five

What were the outcomes? All 6 young from Box 5 at Safari fledged. All 6 young from Box 16 at Safari fledged. All 3 young from Box 11 at Recreation Unlimited fledged. The pipping egg was removed by the parent Eastern Bluebirds in box at Liberty Park so it did not make it. Their natural eggs hatched and fledged, however.

If you have made it through this long narrative, congratulations! Fostering (if done correctly) is usually very successful. The birds are great parents.

The special care of the people involved in this little fostering expedition also amazes me. The person who brought in the young realized they would not survive without their mother. Susan Guarasci from OWC provided special home care for these birds that required frequent feedings and warmth. She also checked on the foster young after they made it to their new homes. Monitors Connie, Darlene, and Teresa knew how old their birds were, provided great data and good matches for fostering.

For those interested in supporting the Ohio Wildlife Center through donations or volunteering, please contact them at:

Ohio Wildlife Center's Hospital
2661 Billingsley Rd.
Columbus, Ohio 43235
(614) 793-WILD
www.ohiowildlifecenter.org



An experienced monitor of over a dozen Bluebird Trails in central and northern Ohio, Madame WingNut enjoys all creatures that fly, regardless of their stage of development.

Send your questions to Madame WingNut at: info@ohiobluebirdsociety.org or by mail to PMB 111, 343 W. Milltown Road Wooster, OH 44691.

Bluebirds thrive in Sandusky County

by Melissa Topey, reprinted with permission from the *Sandusky Register*

FREMONT — A local organization has been ensuring rare bluebirds have a place in Sandusky County.

The Green Creek Wildlife Society has helped increase the population of Eastern Bluebirds in Northwest Ohio since it officially formed in 1984.

"I have banded more than 11,000 bluebirds. Every year when I see my first male bluebird I still get excited. It is the bluest blue you have seen. Someone once said the bluebird wears the sky on its back," said Tom Kashmer, founder of the Green Creek Wildlife Society.



After feeding his young, an eastern bluebird perches on top of a pole in Riley Township on Friday, May 12, 2017.

The society began 33 years ago as an environmental and conservation club with Kashmer, a Gibsonburg teacher at the time, and five high school students.

He wanted to get his students out of the classroom and into the field as often as possible. The first project for the group was to increase the population of Eastern Bluebirds.

"When you are teaching kids, you are as hands on as possible," Kashmer said.

They built 25 bluebird nesting boxes that first year. The society effort that year saw 29 bluebirds move into the county.

Today the group is made up of all ages. The work of the Green Creek Wildlife Society has proven successful as Sandusky County is home to a large population of bluebirds.

The increasing numbers are a result of diligent work.

Kashmer, project manager Lisa Rock and more than 100 volunteers monitor about 800 boxes which have been home to 11,000 baby Eastern Bluebirds.

Bluebirds are timid birds and can easily be driven out of nests by more aggressive birds, such as House Sparrows.

Monitoring has also spotted healthy populations for another bird species, the Purple Martin.

Both birds love the big open spaces of area marsh land in the area.

Kashmer, who is a federal licensed bander, tags the Bluebirds with small metal rings to track the numbers of birds, their movements and identify new birds that have come into the area.

Everything is recorded.

This allows the group to spot trends, nesting success and oversee the overall ecological health of the area.

Volunteers spend hundreds of hours monitoring the nests to check on adult birds and any eggs they may have. Volunteers with more than 30 hours are rewarded, such as with outdoor adventures trips like to the Grand Canyon or Yellowstone Park.

The work is well worth it to see the Eastern Bluebirds and Purple Martins thriving in the area, Kashmer said.

Want to help?

Sponsor a Bluebird box – Cost: \$30

Become a volunteer – Email green creekws@gmail.com for more information on either.

Tom Kashmer was the recipient of the Ohio Bluebird Society Blue Feather Award in 1999 and has been an ongoing leader in conservation.



A pair of purple martins perch on a nesting gourd in a colony in Riley Township on Friday, May 12, 2017.



Tom Kashmer and Lisa Rock of Green Creek Wildlife Society examine a bluebird box in Riley Township on Wednesday, May 10, 2017.



Kashmer bands an eastern bluebird chick on a state owned wildlife production area in Sandusky County on Friday.

Garden As If Life Depended On It

by OBS Board Member Mary Lee Minor



The text which follows summarizes Doug Tallamy's presentation at Bowling Green on September 14, 2016 which was titled **"A Chickadee's Guide to Gardening"**.

When Doug Tallamy unfolded his message with naturalists in northern Ohio, it was as if the package called 'gardening' was wrapped and tied off with a beautiful bow. His premise, delivered with pictures, contends that only native species of plants support insect life, and without insects, birds are hard-pressed to find food. If our landscapes are good for insects, then it follows they are good for birds. If birds love your habitat then lots of other critters do.

Chickadees are true cavity nesters (tree holes) as are 85 other North American birds. There is a time to nest, a short window when chickadees gather mosses and fiber strands like hairs. Once young arrive, feeding becomes the focus. That takes lots of caterpillars. Chickadee parents arrive about every three minutes with food. Adults start around day-break, 6 a.m. and work until nearly 8 p.m. Doug referred to a 1961 study where chickadee parents made 390 trips per day to deliver food to nestlings who spend 60 days in the nest. Whoa! Birds depend on insects for the most part. That is like bluebirds.

Unfolding his facts with humor, Doug teased a little when he suggested that chickadees choose caterpillars to eat because 'they are beautiful' or 'they have wonderful names'. In truth, instinct tells birds that caterpillars are loaded with carytenoids, or protein. Antioxidants are needed to maintain plumage color, vision, sperm vitality, even improve sexual attractiveness. Chickadees get them from food, so they must have enough caterpillars.

In getting back to gardening, or landscaping, Tallamy reminded us that birds do not eat plants. Insects do. Insect bodies have immunities through specialized enzymes; they can break down sappy stuff, and latex gels. Like monarch larvae which are representative of other species of wildlife that depend on native plants.



Photo by Mark Blum of Galion.

"We are not fooling birds when we fail to create a 'foraging hub'" emphasized Tallamy. As you plant non-native, ornamental shrubs and trees, you likely feel as if beautification has taken place. But, if nutrition is not offered to insects, then it is clear that birds' needs will not be met.

Native plants that invite insects including caterpillars include oaks which actually support 557 species of caterpillars, plum cultivars bring as many as 456 caterpillars, and native viburnums welcome 103 types of larvae. There are many more plants. The more we select native plants, the more diversity we attract.

Tallamy addressed fruit-bearing plants and talked about offering seed during autumn and winter months when insect life is much quieter. Non-native fruit plants do not produce the nutrients needed by birds. In fall the birds will feed heavily from flower heads that produce seed. He pointed out that chickadees cache, or hide seed, in nooks and crannies. He even claimed that studies prove chickadees' brains grow in fall aiding in remembering where seeds were hidden. Chickadees locate goldenrod galls, and fly larvae within can be enough to bring them through a cold night.

In closing, Doug urged us to "make America native again".

** Bringing Nature Home by Doug W. Tallamy has closeup photos of insect stages, host plant lists, and details that reveal the special relationships in nature.*

Blooming Bluebirders

Bluebird Trail teaches Seventh-Grade Students about Citizen Science

By Bethany Gray, OCVN and OBS Area Contact

The Yellow Springs School District recently partnered with the Tecumseh Land Trust and Ohio Bluebird Society as part of the District's Project-Based Learning (PBL) requirement. Kate Anderson, a Land Trust Board member and owner of Xarifa Farm in Yellow Springs since 2014, desired to open her property to educate the community about conservation easements and environmental education. Xarifa Farm is a lovely property mixed with forest, prairie and stream in addition to agricultural areas. It sits on the Jacoby Creek, an important watershed conservation focus area for the Land Trust. (The Jacoby flows into the Little Miami River, a designated National Scenic River).

In 2015, Bethany Gray, an OBS Area Contact for Greene County, contacted the Land Trust inquiring if they knew anyone interested in starting a bluebird trail in the area. The stars seemed to align, and Kate and Bethany coordinated to establish a trail on the farm in 2016. Kate's parents had monitored several nest boxes in South Carolina, so Kate was familiar with the process and had also submitted past data to Cornell's NestWatch.org. Kate attended a workshop hosted by Bethany and she and her family monitored the trail in 2016, attracting Bluebirds, Tree Swallows and House Wrens.

After Kate presented the partnership idea to McKinney Middle School, Administrators and Science Teacher Rebecca Eastman were enthusiastic about incorporating cavity-nesting bird conservation into the Spring semester 7th grade PBL curriculum starting in January 2017. Meanwhile, the project was fondly named "Operation Bluebird" and the Land Trust helped raised money with donations from individual members, Lowe's, Home Depot and a mini grant from OBS.



photo by Kate Anderson

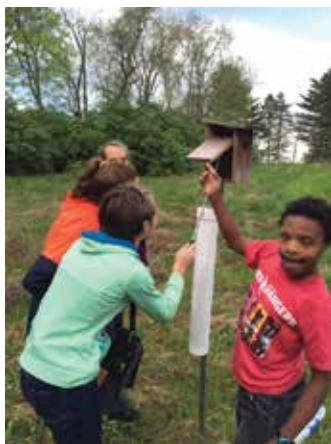


photo by Dennie Eagleson



photo by Jack Hatert

The semester project included:

1. Presentations by Kate and Bethany in the classroom;
2. A study of cavity-nesting birds with each student completing the quiz on NestWatch.org about respectful and appropriate nest monitoring;
3. Building nest boxes, baffles and cutting poles in the wood shop (which were used on the trail and also sold at cost to interested individuals and regional conservation organizations);
4. Monitoring nest boxes on the farm in April and early May;
5. Data input to NestWatch.org and to OBS;
- and 6. Presentation of project with visual displays at the Community PBL Exhibition Night in May.

Kate, Rebecca and the students also created a very educational social media campaign on YouTube, Instagram, Twitter and Facebook. In addition to parents and Land Trust members, employees from US Bank and students from Antioch College also volunteered helping the seventh graders monitor boxes on the farm. The program was also able to accommodate one wheelchair-bound student at the farm. At the end of May, Kate and the Land Trust hosted an Open House at Xarifa Farm for project donors and other community members, where students walked the trail with visitors and discussed the birds nesting there. The program will continue next year.

If you would like to support this program with a tax-deductible donation, you can send a check payable to Tecumseh Land Trust, Attn: Operation Bluebird, P.O. Box 417, Yellow Springs, OH, 45387. You can also donate online through PayPal at www.tecumsehlandtrust.org.

The 2017 Prothonotary Warbler Nesting Season at Alum Creek Lake

By Dick Tuttle, OBS Advisor and Past OBS Blue Feather Award Recipient



The golden swamp warblers had a successful nesting season at Alum Creek Lake this season. I reinstalled the first six boxes to their pipes on March 23 when I could walk on dry lake bottom due to the fact that the lake was at winter water level. Later, I used my canoe to reinstall the

remaining 39 boxes on April 9 and 11 after the lake rose three feet to its summer level, and all professionally controlled by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Starting on May 17, more than a dozen canoe trips were required to monitor nesting Tree Swallows, House Wrens, and attach leg bands to Prothonotary Warbler nestlings. The project of 45 nestjars and nestboxes is located along the northern and western shores of the lake along Hogback Road south of Kilbourne in Delaware County, Ohio. Most nestboxes are paired five yards apart with one having a 1-1/8 inch entrance designed for warblers or wrens, and the other box with a 1-3/8 inch hole for Tree Swallows.

As I prepare this article during the third week of July, 30 warblers have fledged from seven nests, and all but one were wearing U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service aluminum leg bands. I expect four more warblers to fledge from two



The deceased female Prothonotary Warbler was extracted from a Tree Swallow nest on May 17, 2017.

nests after I submit this report for a total of 34 fledglings. In 2016, the project produced only 20 fledglings, so 2017 has the potential to be a more productive year by 70 percent.

The first prothonotary egg was laid on May 17 and the last nestling is scheduled to fledge on July 26 for a seventy-day nesting season. Historically, data recorded during a 14-year period from 2004 through 2017 reveals a 98-day nesting season from May 4 through August 9. Most impressive is the nesting cycle within the nestbox: eggs are laid one per day for three to six days, followed by 12 - 13 days of incubation, then fledging, the most impressive event, occurs only twelve days after hatching, the fastest growth period of all nestbox species that I work with.

The 2017 season presented two additional cases of Tree Swallows weaving prothonotaries into their nests. The first time I had found a swallow nest with a dead warbler was May 24, 2015. The warbler's prone body made up one third of the nest rim and the nest cup held six swallow eggs. The nest appeared to be a warbler's moss nest topped with a swallow's grass cup.

After two more dead prothonotaries were found encased in swallow nests this year, I feared that I might be witnessing to a trend, but I hope not. The second discovery took place on May 1, 2017 in a nest with four swallow eggs, and like the first case, the dead warbler was woven into the rim of the grass nest. The warbler was fresh enough for a photo.



Primary wing feathers have erupted from their coverings making the warbler nestlings at least six days old, a perfect age to attach leg bands.

I always excavate used nests to search for unhatched eggs and deceased nestlings in order to record accurate data. Used swallow nests can be quite dirty with a thick layer of guano. The third unlucky warbler was revealed as I extracted a used swallow nest from its nestjar and shook it in the lake water. A swamp warbler's remains floated, and this time, I had my camera to record an unpleasant photo of my hand holding the remnants of what was once a beautiful bird. All three warblers had entered nestjars with 1-3/8 inch holes meant for swallows.

Tree Swallows are not exempt from having bad luck. On May 17, 2017, I found the remains of a male Tree Swallow that had squeezed through a 1-1/8 inch opening into a nestjar's nest chamber where it failed to exit. The nestjar is made from a plastic drainpipe and its wall is 1/8 inch thick. Since the round outside surface of the nestjar allowed room for wings to flap and wiggle as the swallow squeezed into the nest chamber, the opposite became true as the unlucky swallow found that the nest chamber's round walls restricted every movement as it tried to squeeze out into the outside world. The dead swallow appeared to be sitting in a human-like posture with its tail and wings supporting its torso in an upright position as it contemplated the entrance. It was a disturbing image for sure.

Back to more positive results. It looks like Tree Swallows will raise around 90 young from 23 nests, and House Wrens will fledge around 60 offspring from 13 nests. Wrens will continue to be part of the story since the project's boxes stand along a brushy shore. If boxes were placed in a flooded woodland saturated with beavers, brush would be hard to find and wrens would lack their preferred habitat.

In conclusion, golden swamp warblers continue to be part of the wildlife community in the northern reaches of Alum Creek Lake. Their average distance between active nests has been around 280 yards and they like willow trees and Buttonbush. As I row my canoe to check on their progress, another resident provides much entertainment. Three of four Osprey families occupy three of four platforms installed for them over the past twenty years, and a fourth pair is raising their family in the same dead tree for the third straight year. All four families are raising triplets for a total of twelve young fish hawks. During my canoe trip on July 19 to band three prothonotaries, many of the young fish hawks were beating their wings, trying to get into shape for their first flights. I had many reasons to smile.

Conserve on!

In Contact With Our Area Contacts

By Laurie Lowe, OBS Area Contact, Union County



I live on 5 acres in southeastern Union Co. My husband and I built our own home several years ago doing much of the work ourselves. We were fortunate enough to both be able to

retire early. This has allowed us some time to travel, foster kittens for our local humane society, him to tinker and build in the workshop and me to volunteer and care for my fifth acre vegetable garden and numerous flower beds. In some of my spare time, I can and freeze any produce that isn't eaten, given away or donated to my local food pantry.

For the past eight years I've volunteered with my local Ohio State University Extension county office as a Master Gardener. I held the position of President for two years and for the past five years I've served as our program coordinator. Being a Master Gardener has been a very rewarding experience providing me the opportunity to educate my local community and learn the many aspects of horticulture.

Recently, I began volunteering for the Delaware Preservation Parks system. I was volunteering for a spring DPP event and had the opportunity to meet two area contacts for OBS and they suggested I apply as the Union Co contact. I was excited to learn of this opportunity as there have been bluebirds nesting on our property for over 10 years.

We currently monitor eight homemade nest boxes scattered around our property with plans to add more. Each year we have had successful nesting bluebirds, tree swallows, the occasional house wren and for the first time this year a black capped chickadee fledged a brood of four. A few years ago, my husband set up cameras in a couple of the boxes to provide us with a "birds eye view"; no pun intended. We were able to watch and share the live video of a nesting pair of bluebirds and tree swallows.

My interest in helping the cavity nesters came from my mother-in-law. She has provided nesting sites on her property for many years. Since, I've gotten my parents interested by putting up a nest box on their small neighborhood lot in South Carolina. They have enjoyed monitoring the box and have had much success with nesting bluebirds.

The Sweet Sound of Swifts

By Darlene Sillick, OBS Area Contact

Photos by Paula and Georgean Kyle, Program Directors of the Chimney Swift Association in Texas

The Ohio Bluebird Society, (OBS), was formed in 1987, to support the return and the perpetuation of the Eastern Bluebird (*Sialia sialis*) and other native cavity nesting birds in Ohio. To this end, *OBS will strive for the best methods to use, conserve and create habitat for the protection of such species.* This is our mission statement and is very important to me with the conservation work I want to do for and with secondary cavity nesting birds. The Ohio Bluebird Society provides information and encouragement for those wishing to engage in the conservation of bluebirds and other native cavity nesting species.

I am curious about all native cavity nesters and this time of the year when most birds are slowing down their nesting activities, I am listening to the chitter and twitter of Chimney Swifts. I will never get to see their nest except in pictures as they all pair off and nest in chimneys. There is a cap on my condo chimney but I have heard the nesting young in other chimney's and it is loud for a couple of weeks. Something special happens with Chimney Swifts after they fledge their nesting chimneys. Starting in mid-July into very early October, they do what is called staging. At dusk, the birds fly to a tall chimney stack at a school or large industrial site and fly around together usually clockwise for 10 to 15 minutes or so and then just after sunset and as the light is fading, they dive into these large chimneys for the night. We count how many are entering the site for the night and submit this citizen science data to www.chimneyswifts.org.

Although I am not an expert with Chimney Swifts, I have done a lot of research and talked to a few experts. Apparently, it is not easy to find a natural cavity that holds Chimney Swifts. They used to nest in tree cavities but had to adapt and change their practice to survive deforestation. My passion and interest with this insect eating native species is to make more people aware of the declining Chimney Swifts and take some action to try to help the species before they vanish. In a National Geographic article, they are described as "near threatened and decreasing in population". I imagine that deforestation has played a large part in their decline, along with capped chimneys and the deplorable condition of old industrial chimneys. Many people cap their chimneys for various reasons. <http://www.nationalgeographic.com/animals/birds/c/chimney-swift/> Cornell All About Birds gives some very good information too.

On July 10th, my bluebird friends Paula Ziebarth and Sue Guarasci and I had just finished dinner in downtown Dublin

when I said, "Look! There are swifts above! Let's see what is happening at Sells Middle School". Sells is on the north side of 161, east of Frantz Road and west of Dublin Road. We watched the swifts from the back of the 1919 building and parked between the tennis courts and the back of the building. We arrived about 9:00pm and about 8 or so swifts were flying over the building. This location is a favorite place for staging Chimney Swifts in late July, August and September and into early October.



I discovered the staging site about 15 plus years ago, and have enjoyed making others aware of these amazing creatures and their important use of tall chimney stacks close to dusk. The birds gather from all different directions and fly in a general clockwise flight getting tighter and tighter in their circle then start to enter the chimney for the night. We say it looks like they are being sucked into the chimney or it looks like reverse chimney smoke. We were not disappointed tonight and were quite surprised while counting the birds as they were entering the chimney. They kept going in and by 9:45-9:50 pm we had counted over 675 birds entering the chimney for their evening roost. And this was only July 10! At this early summer date, I thought we would be lucky to see 25 or so birds.

As an avid conservation person working with Eastern Bluebirds, Tree Swallows, Purple Martins and American Kestrels and putting up state of the art housing, many of us monitors have noticed we are having an amazing nesting season in 2017 and fledging many birds. Bluebirds have started their 3rd nesting in central Ohio. Some areas might say the cicadas have helped but that is only for a few weeks and not all of Ohio has cicadas. I

can now add Chimney Swifts to the list of insect eating birds doing very well so far, this season. Of course, they are going to eat many smaller insects. I have never seen this many birds staging this early in the 15 years I have been watching them.

According to www.chimneyswifts.org the weekend of Aug 11, 12, 13 will be Swift Night Out. They want you to watch near dusk for the sound of the swifts twittering and chittering and flying around a chimney before they begin to enter when the light is low enough. Then, as best as you can, count them as they enter the chimney and note the start and end time. It is easy to enter your chimney location and count on the website.

On Sept 8, 9, 10 they have a second Swift Night Out. For both monthly counts, I will visit Sells Middle School. I check the Sunrise Sunset website and try to go at least 30 to 45 minutes or more before sunset and watch the birds come in from all directions. If it is a cloudy and overcast night, the birds will start entering sooner.

About 12 years ago, the high counts at Sells Middle School were over 5000 birds entering the chimney. Visit www.ColumbusAudubon.org under the conservation tab and click on Chimney Swifts to read about the swifts' history and behavior in our area. This YouTube Video shot by my friend Glenn Snow will give you a sense of the show you will see. www.youtube.com/watch?v=5RNN-UwLyQ

Take some time and look for sites in your neighborhood in old school or business chimneys. Take time to report your findings and get others excited to watch the swifts. Take it a step further and get involved in a swift tower conservation project. Several are going up in the central Ohio area later this year. Check Columbus Audubon's calendar of events for several public programs about the swifts during Swift Night out. Bring your lawn chair and you and the mosquitos will enjoy the free show.

Paul and Georgean Kyle, swift experts with www.chimneyswifts.org have authored two books, one on species *Chateura pelagica* and one on building swift towers. They have been a terrific resource to answer my many questions.

On Tuesday October 24, the Columbus Audubon will hold their monthly meeting at the Grange Insurance Audubon Center in Columbus. Judy Semroc, Conservation Specialist with the Cleveland Natural History Museum and the Ohio Bluebird Society's Stark County area contact will speak. She has a fantastic presentation about Chimney Swifts and has put up a tower on her property with nesting success. We are looking forward to hearing her talk since we plan to put

up some towers in the central Ohio area. More information about Judy's talk is on the Columbus Audubon website and calendar of events. Consider joining Columbus Audubon members and guests for any of our monthly meetings.

Now go out and listen near dusk and find a chimney that your neighborhood swifts are using and enter the data on www.chimneyswifts.org. What a great family project and a great thing for kids of all ages to take part in! By the way, Chimney Swifts migrate to the Amazon basin of Peru. They breed north into Canada and east of the Rockies in the United States, and they are looking for staging chimneys all along their migration routes. They are called a flying cigar due to their shape and they never perch but cling onto rough chimney walls facing upward. They cannot stand, perch or walk on the land. They eat and sleep and mate on the wing. Pretty amazing!!



Darlene Sillick

Ohio Bluebird Society trustee and Franklin County area contact

Ohio Ornithology Society and Columbus Audubon conservation committees

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed, citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has." by Margaret Mead



Fostering American Kestrel Nestlings

By Penny Brandau, OBS Trustee



My husband Fritz and I have been bluebird trail monitors for many years and have also monitored a successful kestrel box for the past three years in Lorain County, Ohio. We volunteer with the Black River Audubon Society's bluebird and kestrel programs. This year we had the privilege of being part of a multi-

organizational attempt to save some orphan kestrel nestlings from life in a rehab center by placing them into an active kestrel nest and monitoring the outcome closely to see the benefits or deterrents of fostering. Our program had done no kestrel fostering before so this was unfamiliar territory to all of us.

Many organizations worked together to enable this idea to become a reality. Lorain County Community College has partnered with Black River Audubon Society to create a meadow preserve where the kestrel box was erected 3 years ago (and where 15 kestrels have now fledged). Larry Wilson is the program coordinator for the kestrel program. Master bird bander Gary Fowler has banded all the kestrel chicks from the LCCC kestrel nest box in 2015, 2016 and 2017. Tim Jasinski, a Wildlife Rehabilitation Specialist of Lake Erie Nature and Science Center assisted in banding all the kestrels and provided the vision and link between the orphan kestrel nestlings from the Ohio Bird Sanctuary and the potential of fostering some of their young kestrels into the active Black River Audubon Society kestrel nest at LCCC.

On April 18, 2017, my husband and I checked the kestrel box at LCCC and found it to be still empty although we saw a pair of kestrels near the box, sitting on power lines as they had done in the prior two years when nesting. Our next visit to monitor the box was on April 26th and we were excited to find 4 kestrel eggs nestled in the protective bed of wood shavings we had placed in the box in Feb. Subsequent visits on 5/2 and 5/18 showed a complete clutch of 5 eggs but unfortunately only two of these eggs had hatched on 5/28. Anticipated hatch date was 5/27 so we made another brief visit on 6/2 to find that there were still only 2 kestrel chicks and 3 unhatched eggs in the box.



Larry Wilson contacted Tim Jasinski to arrange for banding the two female kestrel nestlings in the LCCC kestrel box and another check was made of the nest box on 6/10 to confirm that there were still only two to band. Photos taken of the two chicks were compared to photos in a resource book titled "A Photographic Timeline of Hawk Mountain Sanctuary's American Kestrel Nestlings" and the chicks were aged at approx. 13 days old. This corresponded closely with the timeline of the first egg and observed hatch date. Ideal banding age of kestrels according to Master Bander Gary Fowler is around 18-22 days because that is when you can more easily distinguish male from female. The LCCC female kestrel pair were about 17-18 days old on 6/14 when they were banded. Tim Jasinski assisted with the banding and observers/helpers were Larry Wilson, Arlene Ryan, Fritz and Penny Brandau and several others.



Tim Jasinski knew that the LCCC kestrel nest had only 2 nestlings and he wondered if it would be possible to successfully place orphaned kestrel chicks of similar ages into the LCCC nest so that they would be cared for by their own species and fledge into the wild. He was aware of at least 7 kestrel nestlings which were being raised by wildlife rehab specialists. Wouldn't it be wonderful if some of these could be raised by adults of their own species and given a chance to live freely? We were willing to accept 2 or 3 foster kestrels

into the LCCC nest. The parents had successfully raised 5 young last year and the year before and were experienced parents. The ages of the young kestrel orphans were similar and the habitat was ideal.

I talked to kestrel expert Dick Tuttle of Delaware County, Ohio regarding the fostering plan and he suggested that perhaps the diet of the young should be briefly supplemented with mice or house sparrows to help the parents during the sudden rapid increase in their clutch size. Again, Tim came through by providing frozen white mice. The plan was for the Brandau's to place 2 thawed mice into the kestrel box hole every couple of days to help the parents feeding just in case it might be needed.

On June 19th, the LCCC kestrel box was lowered on its telescoping pole by Fritz Brandau and Larry Wilson and 3 foster kestrel nestlings (one male and two female) were placed by Tim Jasinski into the box along with two thawed mice. The foster kestrels had been banded on their left legs earlier by Gary Fowler to distinguish them from the two LCCC kestrels which he had banded on their right legs on June 14th.

Tim suggested a wait of two days for the kestrels to "settle in" before attempting to lower the nest box to place two more thawed mice into the nest box hole. On June 21st, my husband and I lowered the box and placed two thawed mice in the entrance hole. However, when the door was opened briefly to check that all five kestrels were still doing well it was apparent that only three kestrels were in the box! Our fears were that the slightly older foster kestrels might have eaten the two LCCC female kestrels. A quick phone call and texting to Tim ensued and it was decided that since clear visibility of the kestrel leg bands wasn't possible when the nest box was initially lowered that it would need to be lowered once more to confirm if the kestrels in the box were native or foster kestrels. If the bands were on the left legs then we decided we would not attempt fostering kestrel nestlings in the future at the expense of the natural ones.

When the nest box was lowered the second time and the door was opened to get a quick photo the foster male kestrel decided to bail out of the door! Fritz quickly captured him and placed him back in the box- this was obviously a premature fledging since he only made it a few feet into the meadow grass near the box. However, the photo which was taken of the box contents clearly showed that although the foster male's leg band was on his left leg the female's was on her right leg! What a relief to have proof that the two females in the box were the slightly younger LCCC females and the two foster female kestrels must have fledged! Whew!



On June 25th Fritz and I were walking the LCCC meadow perimeter checking the 18 bluebird boxes when a female kestrel suddenly appeared from the east and alarm called as we neared bluebird boxes #5 and 6. She persistently called and hovered then flew to the windmill platform. We were able to see a female kestrel sitting on a solar panel and her left leg band was clearly seen in a photo. This was very encouraging! Mom kestrel was protecting and caring for this foster fledgling! The other LCCC kestrels were due to fledge around June 27.

On June 27 Fritz and I again returned to LCCC to check on the kestrels. None were seen at their box but when we walked to the east end of the meadow Fritz spotted a kestrel on the LCCC turbine tower. This kestrel flew toward us as we approached bluebird boxes 5 and 6 and alarm called as she flew. We then noticed several other kestrels on or under solar panels of the roof of a small building in that area. Some looked like they were enjoying the sun while others were relaxing in the shade of the panels. We definitely saw at least 6 kestrels! The male and one of the females were under the panel, three others were on the roof peak and one was under the opposite side of the panel. You can see the two shade lovers even in the second photo if you look closely.



On June 28th, we went to LCCC to clean out the kestrel box. An adult kestrel appeared overhead and alarm called as we circled the meadow. We then realized that at least 3 kestrels were on the LCCC turbine platform (the photo cropping revealed 4 kestrels). Mom kestrel flew to a tower line which was south of the turbine and another kestrel was seen below her on the line. This made a count of at least 6, possibly 7, kestrels seen again on this day.



I walked the area once more on July 1 and saw at least 6 kestrels in the eastern area of the meadow. I don't know how long they will stay together as a family but this experience of helping with the fostering of rehab kestrel nestlings has proven that kestrels can accept, care for and protect foster nestlings which are placed in their active nests. They continue to care for them after fledging too. It has been amazing and beautiful to observe.

It has been a privilege to work with so many different organizations and talented, dedicated people to make Tim Jasinski's vision a reality. Allowing kestrels to be raised in a family unit instead of a rehab facility is a clear win for the kestrels! Hopefully this story will challenge other rehab and conservation organizations to work more closely together and to communicate opportunities for placing orphan kestrels whenever possible into appropriate foster nests.



“A Nest of Bluebirds”

A letter from OBS member, Laura Dorman to Chuck Jakubchak, former OBS board member

Hi Chuck,

I am a member of Canton Audubon and enjoyed your presentation last November about Turkeys. You gave out copies of the book “A Nest of Bluebirds” and challenged each of us to share the book with a kid in a unique way. I just want to let you know I took your challenge to heart and found a great way to share the book.

I am an occasional volunteer at the Huston-Brumbaugh Nature Center in Alliance. The past 2 days, several classrooms of pre-schoolers visited the center for guided nature walks. At the end of the walks, the kids came into the bird viewing room where I read the book to them. I even had with me one of the Audubon stuffed bluebirds that plays the bluebird song, which I used while reading the book. After the 2 days of reading to a total of about 50 kids, I donated the book to Huston-Brumbaugh to be put in the kids play area or used in future programs.

Adam Zorn, Program Director at HB, was so impressed with the book that he would like to use it in a “Storybook Trail”, for which he needs more than 1 copy. Because my husband was also at the November CAS meeting, we got 2 books, so I am going to also donate the other one to HB.

Thank you for making this possible! It was a blast, for both the kids and myself.

Laura Dorman

The book Laura mentions is called “A Nest of Bluebirds” by Rose Marie Botts Scott. The author donated hundreds of copies to OBS to be used to teach children about bluebirds. Thanks for sharing this story with us Chuck! We know Ms. Scott would be thrilled with this story too!



Member News

"Sometimes you belong so you can give, not just receive. The membership dues to OBS allow us to do so much to help birds, our communities and ultimately ourselves."

~ Chuck Jakubchak

Welcome to New Members

Susi Brown
Barbara Durst
JoAnn Kale
Laurie Lowe
Linda McAdams
Lisa Rock
Richard Thacker
Kelsey Werbeck

Thank You to Our Donors

Charles and Della Koester
Dieter Schneppat, Esq.

Amazon Smile

Holiday Shopping will begin soon! Amazon Smile is a simple and automatic way for you to support the Ohio Bluebird Society every time you shop, at no additional cost to you. When you shop at smileamazon.com you'll find the exact same low prices, vast selection and convenient shopping experience as Amazon.com, with the added bonus that Amazon will donate a portion of the purchase price to OBS.

OBS Annual Meeting 2017

On July 8th, 2017, the Ohio Bluebird Society held their annual Members Meeting followed by a board meeting with election of officers and voting for new trustees. The membership meeting agenda included several committee reports. Mike Watson reported on final 2016 nestling numbers and compared numbers to previous years. He also gave an update on new Area Contacts and the OBS grants which had been given last year. Outgoing secretary/ treasurer Diana Plant provided the financial report and Membership Chair Pat Dutton gave her report. New trustee nominees John Barber, Darlene Sillick and Molly Wilsbacher were unanimously voted in and welcomed by the current board. Voting for officers followed at the board meeting. Please welcome and thank the following new officers for their willingness to serve OBS:

President: Mike Watson
Vice President: no nominees
Secretary: Mary Lee Minor
Treasurer: Molly Wilsbacher

We appreciate the work of the three outgoing trustees. Kurt Gaertner, Don Plant and Dale Rabung. Thank you!!

Other items on the board meeting agenda included bylaws revision discussion and grant applications. Planning for the 2018 Ohio Bluebird Society Conference has begun! Look for emerging details on the OBS website. The next Board meeting will be held at 10am on Saturday September 23, 2017

The 2018 OBS Conference will be held Feb. 24, 2018 at the Grange Insurance Audubon Center in Columbus.

Bluebird Trails Fulfill Elderly Man's Wish on Bucket List

By Bethany Gray, OCVN and OBS Area Contact

In January, the Beaver Creek Wetlands Association (BCWA) hosted a bluebird workshop with about 50 people attending. One elderly man of 80 saw it advertised in the Dayton Daily News and decided to attend. Later in the Spring, he contacted Debbie Karr, Administrative Coordinator of BCWA and also a trail monitor at the Phillips Park complex in Beavercreek. He stated that he had actually never seen a bluebird in the wild, and it was an item high on his Bucket List. Since the man had some mobility constraints, Debbie was kind to arrange a special visit where he could watch the bluebirds at Phillips from an accessible location. Additionally, she shared this story with Ken Bish, a Development Volunteer and trail monitor at Russ Nature Reserve in Beavercreek (managed by Greene County Parks & Trails). Ken invited the gentleman to visit the more easily accessible boxes at Russ where the bluebirds were nesting not too far from the parking lot. He was absolutely thrilled! A mini grant from OBS in 2016 helped fund the bluebird trail at Phillips Park, so OBS members and donors also contributed to fulfilling this man's wish in southwest Ohio.

OBS Area Contacts (as of July 2017)

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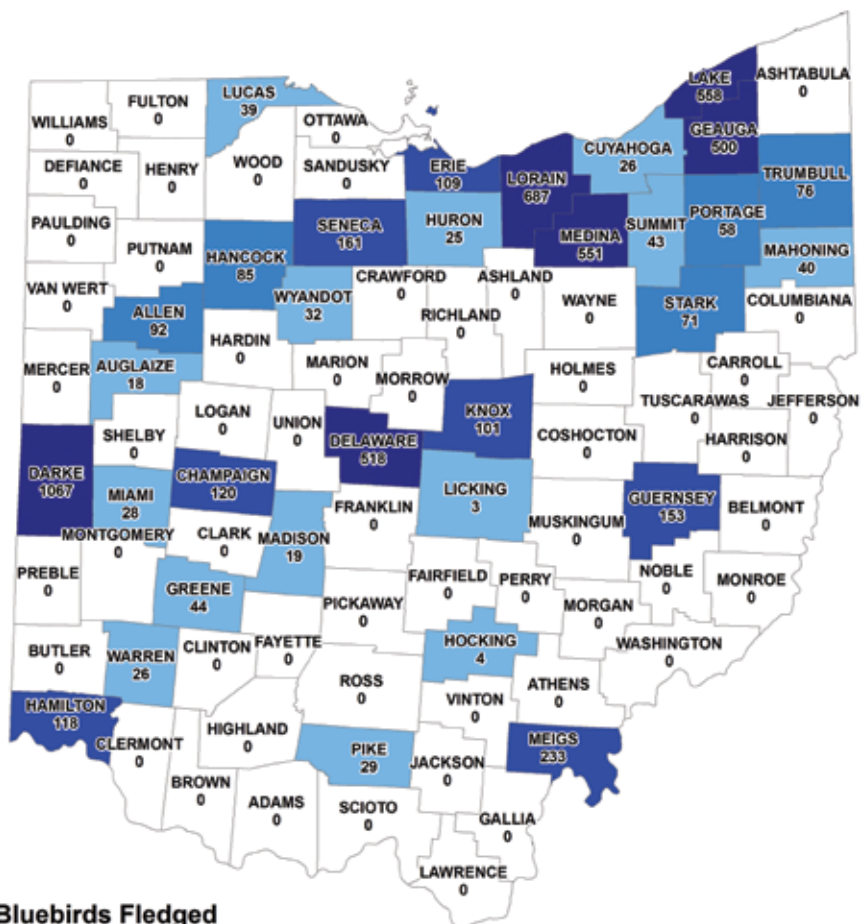
OBS 2016 FLEDGLING REPORT

Reported As Of 2/13/17 :
Eastern Bluebird - 5,634

In accordance with our Mission Statement, we
support all native cavity nesting birds in Ohio.

Tree Swallow - 5,619
House Wren - 1,797
Carolina Chickadee - 154
Black- Capped Chickadee - 90
Carolina Wren - 18
Prothonotary Warbler - 61
Purple Martins - 1,285
Eastern Tufted Titmouse - 16
American Kestrel - 99
Barn Swallow - 110
Wood Duck - 0
Osprey - 4
White-breasted Nuthatch - 7
Eastern Phoebe - 13
House Sparrow Eggs Discarded - 1,079
House Sparrows Dispatched - 497

Send info to: info@ohiobluebirdsociety.org
Download fillable form -
see FLEDGLING REPORT tab





OHIO BLUEBIRD SOCIETY

PMB 111
343 W. Milltown Rd.
Wooster, Ohio 44691

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Mission Statement

The Ohio Bluebird Society was formed in 1987 to support the return and the perpetuation of the Eastern Bluebird (*Sialia sialis*) and other native cavity nesting birds in Ohio. To this end, the Ohio Bluebird Society will strive for the best methods to use, conserve and create habitat for the protection of these species.

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Deadline for Submitting Articles:

Spring Issue - February 1

Summer Issue - May 1

Fall Issue - August 1

Winter Issue - November 1



This email was from Diane Deveraux of Lorain County. She enjoys the antics of her back yard bluebirds and was willing to share the smiles with us. Thanks Diane!

I missed a great photo opportunity last evening. The bluebirds had been busy all day feeding their newly hatched chicks (just hatched yesterday.) After dinner, I glanced out the window and the father was hanging on the door of the birdhouse with three BIG babies sitting just above the door peering down at him waiting to be fed!

I grabbed the camera and got a few more shots. They're not great because I was shooting from so far away but you get the idea.

After the big babies flew off, the mother landed on the house and, with a lot of chatter and wing flapping, appeared to be telling the father that he needed to do something about these "teenagers."

Fun to watch!